

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
COME-00 EB-08 TRSE-00 AID-05 IO-13 HA-05 /095 W  
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R 141202Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9490  
INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, NI  
SUBJECT: THE COST OF FESTAC: SKEPTICISM

REF: LAGOS 8028

1. THE NIGERIAN PRESS AND PUBLIC HAVE REACTED  
WITH PREDICTABLE SKEPTICISM TO THE JUNE 28 REPORT  
FROM THE FMG DECLARING THAT THE 1977 SECOND WORLD  
BLACK AND AFRICAN FESTIVAL OF ARTS AND CULTURE  
(FESTAC) COST NIGERIA "ONLY" 141 MILLION NAIRA.  
PRIVATE COMMENTS WHICH WE HAVE HEARD ARE LARGELY  
MIRRORED IN PRESS EDITORIALS.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, THE JULY 1 NEW NIGERIAN (NN), CALL-  
ING THE REPORT A "WHITEWASH JOB," COMMENTED:  
"WE FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SWALLOW THE FMG'S  
ASSERTION THAT ONLY 141 MILLION NAIRA WAS  
SPENT IN ORGANIZING THE FESTIVAL. THIS IS  
CLEARLY AN UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE FACTS, AND  
WE STRONGLY ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT TO CHECK  
MORE CLOSELY INTO THE ACCOUNTS IN ORDER  
TO FIND OUT HOW MANY MORE MILLIONS OF  
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NAIRA ENDED UP IN PRIVATE POCKETS BOTH  
WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THIS COUNTRY. IT IS  
VERY DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THE TYPE OF  
EXTRAVAGANCE AND COLOSSAL WASTE OF RESOURCES  
WHICH WE WITNESSED DURING THE FESTIVAL  
COST THE PALTRY AMOUNT WHICH WAS PUBLISHED.  
IT IS ALSO GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT ONE MAJOR

REASON FOR OUR PRESENT FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES WAS THE HORRENDOUS EXPENDITURE WHICH WE EMBARKED UPON IN ORDER TO STAGE FESTAC." NN NOTES, "THE BELIEF EXISTS THAT VERY MANY PEOPLE ENRICHED THEMSELVES AND MILKED THE NATION OF SEVERAL MILLION NAIRA THROUGH FESTAC," AND CONCLUDES, "WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW IS HOW MANY PEOPLE CASHED IN....TO PILFER NATIONAL RESOURCES AND ENRICH THEMSELVES."

3. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, THE JULY 10 NIGERIAN TRIBUNE TERMS THE APPEARANCE OF THE REPORT "A PLEASANT SURPRISE" BUT ADDS: "MOST COMMENTATORS ARE AGREED THAT THE FESTAC ACCOUNT AS PRESENTED BY MR. LETON LEFT A LOT UNEXPLAINED. IN ALL FAIRNESS, THE COMMISSIONER HIMSELF ADMITTED THAT THE FIGURES WERE NOT ALTOGETHER CONCLUSIVE. INDEED, BECAUSE NIGERIA WAS STILL SUFFERING FROM OIL FUMES AT THE TIME OF FESTAC, A LOT OF THE SPENDING WAS DONE AS IF THERE WOULD BE NO DAY OF RECKONING. WHAT IS SO BAFFLING IS HOW ANYBODY CAN COME OUT AND SAY THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT THE GOVERNMENT SPENT ON A GIVEN ITEM\* WASN'T THERE A SPECIFIC HEAD TO WHICH ALL FESTAC EXPENDITURE WAS CREDITED?" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE TRIBUNE ASKS, "EVEN IF ONE ACCEPTS THE FIGURE OF NAIRA 141 MILLION, WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT A SIZABLE PORTION OF THAT AMOUNT DID NOT END UP IN THE PRIVATE POCKETS OF UNDESERVING INDIVIDUALS?" TRIBUNE CONCLUDES: "IN ANY CASE, WOULD IT NOT HAVE BEEN MORE HONORABLE IF NIGERIA HAD SPENT JUST 10 PERCENT OF NAIRA 141 MILLION ON A PROPER REHABILITATION OF THE HUNDREDS OF BEGGARS AND LUNATICS WHO STILL ROAM OUR STREETS TODAY? IS IT WORTHWHILE FOR A NATION TO SEEK INTERNATIONAL RESPECT AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS OWN SELF RESPECT? FACED WITH SUCH A WISHY-WASHY ACCOUNT AS PRESENTED BY MR. LETON, EVEN CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO SHOULD BE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT THE VIEW THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO POST-MILITARY PROBE. I NOMINATE FESTAC 1977 ACCOUNT FOR A THOROUGH AND PENETRATING PROBE."

4. COMMENT: FMG HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO AT ONE TIME PUBLICLY PLEDGED THAT "EVERY KOBO

SPENT ON FESTAC WOULD BE ACCOUNTED FOR." WITH  
THE LETON REPORT, THAT PLEDGE HAS, AT LEAST  
GENERALLY, BEEN FULFILLED. NEVERTHELESS, THE  
LARGER QUESTIONS OF WHY THE MONEY WAS SPENT AND  
COULD IT NOT HAVE BEEN SPENT MORE APPROPRIATELY  
REMAIN AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE POLITICAL  
THEMES IN 1979.  
EASUM

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** COSTS, CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 jul 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
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**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**TAGS:** PGOV, SCUL, NI  
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